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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **NFA raises palay procurement on higher buying price**

**BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG**

May 22, 2024 02:20 PM

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Following decision to raise the palay buying price last April, the National Food Authority (NFA) said it was able to boost the quantity of milled rice by 14.6 percent compared to last year's data.

In a recent NFA council meeting, over 111,720 metric tons have been raised since the middle of May, while the grains agency was able to procure an additional 2.41 million 50-kilo bags of palay within a month since the price increase.

To compare, the NFA only procured a total of 142,244 bags of palay between January and April.

The stocks have been raised due to the NFA's decision to increase the buying price per kilo last April 11 to compete with private traders and increase the buffer stock.

From P23, clean palay per kilo was procured at P30, dry palay went from P19 to P23, and fresh and wet buying prices went up to a range of P17 to P23.

NFA Acting Administrator Larry Lacsion said that the new price scheme helped enhance the volume of palay, stating that "I think the NFA Council's strong understanding of NFA's challenges has resulted in stronger collaboration. We thank Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. and the Council for this."

From January to May, the agency was able to obtain a total of 2.5 million bags of play. This is at least 82.76 percent of the 3.08 million target for half of the year.

The last time the NFA boosted its buying price was September 2023.

"We're still aiming to hit that target since there are other areas like Bulacan where farmers haven't completed their rice harvest," Lacson said.

"Farmers I spoke to are very happy with this initiative of the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to help farmers increase their income."

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/22/nfa-raises-palay-procurement-on-higher-buying-price>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Metro Manila pork prices hit P420/kilo – DA

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 23, 2024 | 12:00am



Pork prices are expected to go up due to import limits.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The retail price of pork reached as high as P420 per kilo, based on the latest monitoring of the Department of Agriculture in Metro Manila markets, as a ranking DA official maintained that some traders are involved in overpricing as the farmgate price of pork remains stable.

In a chance interview during the opening ceremony of Livestock Philippines and Aquatic Philippines 2024 in Pasay yesterday, Agriculture Undersecretary for livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano said that concerned agencies, including the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry, should conduct inspections to identify the traders involved in overpricing.

“We have enough supply and the retail price (of pork) should be low. There are only traders who take advantage in certain areas,” Savellano said.

Based on the monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of pork belly or liempo ranged from P340 to P420 per kilo yesterday compared to the previous level of up to P400 per kilo on May 20.

“We should inform the people that there are areas where they can buy (pork) at lower retail prices,” Savellano added.

At the same time, he assured the public that there is enough supply of pork despite an increase in areas affected by African swine fever.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/05/23/2357183/metro-manila-pork-prices-hit-p420kilo-da>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# House OKs bill restoring NFA power to import rice

[Delon Porcalla](#) - The Philippine Star

May 23, 2024 | 12:00am



A worker arranges sacks of rice at a warehouse of the National Food Authority in Balagtas, Bulacan yesterday.

Miguel De Guzman

**MANILA, Philippines** — Administration lawmakers approved on third and final reading on Tuesday the measure amending provisions of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) in the hope of substantially bringing down the price of rice in the retail market.

House Bill 10381 was approved in plenary via a 231-3 vote with one abstention, which proposes to amend Republic Act 8178 (Agricultural Tariffication Act) as well as the five-year-old RTL (Republic Act 11203).

The measure was approved overwhelmingly, with the objective to amend certain provisions in the RTL and bring back the power of the National Food Authority (NFA) to import as well as sell the staple in the market.

Speaker Martin Romualdez said the move is aimed at making “high-quality rice affordable” to every Filipino.

“This bill is not just a policy change; it is a powerful pledge to every Filipino. We are committed to ensuring that rice – our staple food – remains affordable and accessible to all,” Romualdez said.

Rep. Mark Enverga, chairman of the House committee on agriculture and food security, earlier assured the senators and the public in general that they definitely have “safeguards” in restoring the power of the NFA in helping stabilize the price of rice.

“Before, the NFA had monopoly in terms of rice imports, they had monopoly in terms of regulation. I would like to assure our counterparts in the Senate that this is a different scenario,” he said.

House Deputy Speaker David Suarez of Quezon province and Rep. Jude Acidre of Tingog party-list expressed hope the Senate will change their mind about bringing the power back to NFA, citing the history of corruption the agency had in previous administrations.

“Let’s not forget this is not an issue of corruption, but rather an issue of food security and price of rice and we should bring our attention to the main agenda, which is the price of rice, which is food security, that should be our focus,” Suarez said.

Acidre said the passage of the amendments to RTL “is an important step for them (senators) to prove that we are also one in providing solutions to our problems.”

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor in a radio interview yesterday asked the Senate to immediately act on the pending measures calling for amendments of RTL.

“The review and amendments of the RTL is necessary to correct the loopholes of the RTL,” Montemayor added.

Montemayor noted that prior to the implementation of the RTL, the country’s rice sufficiency level was at 90 percent but it went down to 77 percent.

“We did not achieve the purpose of the RTL to strengthen domestic production. In fact, it (local production) declined and the retail price of rice also increased,” Montemayor said.

Meanwhile, Farmers group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) urged Congress to increase the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) to P30 billion from the current P10 billion.

“We are hoping that the P30 billion (allocated under RCEF) will be approved, which is based on our computation that will be collected in the rice tariffs in the next five years,” SINAG executive director Jayson Cainglet.

Cainglet added that the P30 billion include P12-billion cash assistance to farmers tilling three hectares; P6 billion for inbred rice seed, development and propagation; P7 billion for rice farm machineries; P3 billion loan from Landbank and Development Bank of the Philippines; P1 billion for expended rice credit assistance and rice extension services.

“Even the rice imports will decrease, the P30 billion should be automatic so that there will be more direct benefit to the rice farmers. Even if the imports go down to 2.8 million metric tons, the tariff collection could still exceed P30 billion,” Cainglet added.- **Bella Cariaso**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/23/2357207/house-oks-bill-restoring-nfa-power-import-rice>



**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# Senate ratifies bicam reports of 3 priority measures

By: [Charie Abarca](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 12:13 AM May 23, 2024

Inquirer files

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate ratified on Wednesday the bicameral conference committee reports of priority measures Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, New Government Procurement Act, and the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

The ratification of the bicameral conference committee reports of the said measures was approved during the chamber's last session day of the 19th Congress' 2nd regular session.

Sen. Raffy Tulfo presented to the floor the report on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill (SB) No. 2221 and House Bill (HB) No. 7325 or the proposed Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers.

The measure was supposed to be signed into law in June by President Bongbong Marcos Jr., but it was subjected to further review.

Sen. Sonny Angara, on the other hand, presented in the plenary the bicameral conference committee report on SB 2593 and HB 9648, otherwise known as the New Government Procurement Reform Act.

The proposed New Government Procurement Reform Act, if enacted, will pave the way for an Electronic Procurement System. It is seen to promote “greater transparency, accountability, operational efficiency, and value for money.”

Meanwhile, Sen. Cynthia Villar, in the same plenary session, presented the bicameral conference committee report on SB 2432 and HB 3915 or the Anti-agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

Like the two previous bills, the bicameral conference panel report on the Anti-agricultural Economic Sabotage was likewise ratified.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1943791/senate-ratifies-bicam-reports-of-3-priority-measures>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# ASF vaccine enters third phase of trials —

## DA

May 22, 2024 | 8:45 pm



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Wednesday said a vaccine for African Swine Fever (ASF) is in the third stage of trials, and could be approved within the year.

“We are in the third phase, the last trial. And hopefully, it will be over soon because that’s what the industry has asked for,” Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor B. Savellano told reporters on the sidelines of the Livestock and Aquaculture Philippines 2024.

As of April 26, 11 provinces had active cases of ASF, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

These are Batangas, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Camarines Sur, Albay, Bohol, Misamis Occidental, Sarangani, Agusan del Norte, and Surigao del Sur.

“What needs to be done now is for the (Food and Drug Administration) and the BAI to work together, so that we can speed up the response to ASF,” he added.

The DA has said that the BAI, FDA, and the Department of Health are set to sign a memorandum of agreement regarding the fast-tracking of the approval process for animal vaccines.

During the first quarter, hog production declined 4.3% to 419.37 thousand MT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. This was a reversal of the 5.1% growth a year earlier.

Separately, Alfred Ng, vice-chairman of the National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc said hog industry output is expected to grow 10% to 15% even without the ASF vaccine.

“The repopulation effort (in the hog industry) is ongoing,” Mr. Ng said on the sidelines of the event.

However, he added that the hog industry is not seeing further ASF cases at the moment due to biosecurity measures implemented by raisers.

“There aren’t many reported cases of ASF. So, we are not too alarmed by that. Although the weights (of hogs) are getting smaller,” he added.

He said imports of pork meat remain a challenge for hog raisers.

“Imports are very high... it’s a challenge for local production,” Mr. Ng said.

Pork imports rose 11.92% to 128.51 million kilograms during the first quarter, according to the BAI. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/22/596864/asf-vaccine-enters-third-phase-of-trials-da/>

## BUSINESS WORLD:

# NEDA backs push for rice imports by NFA

May 23, 2024 | 12:32 am



PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS  
By **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**, *Reporter*

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) on Wednesday backed a proposal allowing the National Food Authority (NFA) to boost rice stocks through imports during emergencies amid spiraling prices.

“I’m still in favor of strengthening the NFA’s role in buffer stocking for emergency purposes,” NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan told reporters on the sidelines of *BusinessWorld*’s economic forum.

“There has to be a way of sourcing the buffer stocks in a way that won’t further destabilize the market,” he said in mixed English and Filipino. “That involves, under those circumstances where production is lacking, getting the buffer stock from imports.”

If it can’t import directly, the agency should be allowed to buy rice stocks from importers to boost its stock, he added.

The Philippines is hard-pressed to ensure that it has enough rice supply amid a prolonged dry spell brought by El Niño and the looming rains from La Niña.

“Consumption is growing simply because the population is growing, so there is that gap,” Mr. Balisacan said. “When you have that gap, you have to have additional sources of supply.”

Under the Rice Tariffication Law, the NFA can only keep its buffer stock by buying rice from local farmers. But the local shortage keeps the agency from fulfilling its mandate, Mr. Balisacan said.

State auditors in 2022 flagged the NFA's failure to stock up on rice. The agency's rice inventory ranged from 111,042 metric tons (MT) to 182,612 MT, far behind the national rice buffer stocking requirement of 300,000 MT, the Commission on Audit said.

The House of Representatives on Tuesday passed on third and final reading changes to the law, including restoring the NFA's regulatory power over the rice industry.

House Bill No. 10381 empowers the NFA to import rice if there are no available local sources, upon the approval of the Agriculture secretary.

The NFA may also require warehouses to register in its national database. The agency may also collect and analyze data on rice trading activities.

Under the bill, a food security emergency includes a shortage in rice supply and extraordinary price increases.

The Senate has yet to pass a counterpart measure.

Mr. Balisacan said Administrative Order No. 20 issued by President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. last month would ensure timely and adequate farm imports.

The President had ordered agencies to reduce nontariff barriers and administrative restrictions on farm imports.

The government should not rely on the NFA alone to stabilize rice prices, Mr. Balisacan said. "We have been there, and we don't want to go back to a regime that has been shown to not work."

Local regular milled rice costs P49.37 a kilo, while well-milled rice costs P51.28, according to the Agriculture department's latest price watch. Imported regular milled rice and well-milled rice cost P49.61 and P52.50.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/05/23/596916/neda-backs-push-for-rice-imports-by-nfa/>

## *Butuan coffee group gets P9.6-M grant*

By Philippine News Agency

May 23, 2024

**BUTUAN CITY** — A group of coffee growers in Tagbina, Surigao del Sur, has received a P9.6-million grant from the Department of Agriculture (DA) to expand its marketing and production operations.

Liesel Chavaria, manager of San Nicolas Development Cooperative (Sanideco), lauded the government's continuing support of their organization through the DA's Philippine Rural Development Program (PRDP).

"We received an additional P9.6 million support from the DA-PRDP in terms of equipment that includes 30 units of all-weather solar dryers, a cargo truck, and a hauling truck," Chavaria said.

She said that cash amounting to P796,000 to be used for buying coffee was also included in the additional support from the government.

"The Sanideco, with 400 members, now covers around 600 hectares of coffee farms in Barangays Doña Carmen, Sta. Juana, Hinagdanan, and Malatab here in Tagbina," she said.

In 2022, the group started its coffee processing operations with the support of the DA that provided P2.4 million for the purchase of machinery and equipment.

"We produce premium and fine coffee products which we supply to the market in Surigao del Sur and the nearby provinces. We are also supplying some coffee shops," Chavaria said.

In 2023, after a year of processing operations, she said the cooperative managed to earn a P403,000 net income.

"With the additional support from the government, we are expanding our operations this year to widen our coverage in coffee production. We are targeting around 175 hectares of coffee farms for expansion," Chavarria said.

**The new trucks will speed up the transportation of harvested coffee from farms to the processing site in Tagbina, she said.**

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/23/business/agribusiness/butuan-coffee-group-gets-p96-m-grant/1947894>



# *PhilRice distributes rice seeds to Lanao farmers*

By The Manila Times  
May 23, 2024

**CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY** — Thirteen Lanao del Norte municipalities received 21,499 bags of certified inbred seeds from the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Tuesday.

In a statement, the provincial government said it accepted the assistance under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) program, particularly the seed program that is spearheaded by the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), an agency under the DA.

RCEF aims to increase the adoption of certified seeds (CS) of inbred rice, improve quality, availability of and access to inbred rice CS, and increase the number of farmers' organizations engaged in seed production and trade.

One of the farmer-beneficiaries was Jerry Enterina of Lala town, who said the seeds would improve their potential earnings, especially with the ongoing dry season.

"We were able to learn about choosing the right seeds for our rice fields so that we can generate better harvest yield," he said in the vernacular.

**RCEF was created by Republic Act 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law, with P10-billion annual funding from 2019 to 2025. For the rice seed component, PhilRice is allocated P3 billion a year to propagate and distribute high-yielding seed varieties to farmer-beneficiaries.**

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/23/business/agribusiness/philrice-distributes-rice-seeds-to-lanao-farmers/1947893>

## *Trade show to promote tech adoption*

By The Manila Times

May 23, 2024

INFORMA Markets in the Philippines is optimistic that this year's Livestock Philippines and Aquaculture Philippines will empower stakeholders from both subsectors to adopt technology and enter new markets, helping fuel economic growth at the regional and national levels.

"We are optimistic that this year's Livestock Philippines and Aquaculture Philippines will play a pivotal role in unlocking the substantial potential of the Philippine livestock and aquaculture subsectors," said Rungphech Chitanuwat, country general manager of Informa Markets in the Philippines.

"Through a comprehensive showcase of exhibits, seminars and workshops, Informa Markets aims to highlight the most recent advancements, technologies and market trends at Livestock Philippines and Aquaculture Philippines," she added.



This year's Livestock Philippines and Aquaculture Philippines aims to promote technology adoption and open new markets for producers in the two subsectors. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The trade show opened its doors to visitors and exhibitors on Wednesday at the World Trade Center in Pasay City with Sen. Francis Tolentino and Agriculture Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano on hand.

The Department of Agriculture is supporting this year's Livestock Philippines and Aquaculture Philippines.

The trade show will also have seminars and conferences tailored to offer valuable insights to participants, particularly those involved in farm operations, aiming to deepen their knowledge of the livestock and aquaculture industries. Some of the topics that will be presented by select association partners and events exhibitors are livestock farming, swine production, alternative feeds, farm operation and sustainability, among many others.

This year, a number of associations from both the livestock and aquaculture subsectors have backed this year's trade show: Philippine Society of Animal Nutritionists, Central Luzon State University, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center/Aquaculture Department and PhilTilapia Stakeholders Association Inc.

Also, the Batangas Egg Producers Cooperative and the US Soybean Export Council will showcase the Bidang Egg Kids, which aims to combat protein malnutrition among children in the country.

The exhibition hall will also feature educational attractions, such as the Eggcellent Corner by the Batangas Egg Producers Cooperative and Sustainability Square spearheaded by Prestige Paper Products and the Central Luzon, the events' sustainability partners.

"The vast potential of the Philippines' livestock and aquaculture subsectors can be realized by bringing together stakeholders, technology, providers and people who have access to new markets, among many others, through events like Livestock Philippines and Aquaculture Philippines," Chitanuwat added.

This year marks the 7th edition of Livestock Philippines, while Aquaculture Philippines is in its 4th edition, aiming to establish itself as an independent event in the next edition.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/23/business/agribusiness/trade-show-to-promote-tech-adoption/1947895>

# Higher buying prices boost NFA stocks

By Jed Macapagal

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May 23, 2024



*Sacks of palay in an NFA warehouse are shown on January 2024. (NFA Capiz photo)*

The National Food Authority (NFA) said the decision to raise the palay buying price has allowed the agency to exponentially increase its palay inventory within a month.

The agency said the move allowed NFA to compete with private traders to build its buffer stock, enabling it to procure an additional 2.41 million 50-kilo bags as of May 15.

Between January 1 and April 15, when buying prices were still low, the NFA has only procured a total 142,244 bags of palay.

Last month, the NFA Council raised the procurement price per kilo of palay to P23 to P30 for clean and dry palay from P19 to P23 while the buying price for fresh and wet increased to P17 to P23 from P16 to P19.

In all, a total 2.5 million bags of palay have been bought between January 1 and May 15, representing 82.76 percent of the 3.08 million target for the period.

“We’re still aiming to hit that target since there are other areas like Bulacan where farmers have not completed their rice harvest,” said Larry Lacson, NFA acting administrator.

NFA said as of May 15, the amount of milled rice has reached 111,720 metric tons which is 14.6 percent higher than in the same period last year.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_business/higher-buying-prices-boost-nfa-stocks/](https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/higher-buying-prices-boost-nfa-stocks/)

## ***‘Power to import rice should not be returned to NFA’***

Ada Pelonia

May 23, 2024

THE government should have explored other options for importation to obtain buffer stock, according to an economist.

Roehlano Briones, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), issued the statement after the House of Representatives approved Tuesday the bill that seeks to amend the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), giving the National Food Authority (NFA) the power to import rice as a last resort.

“I think we could actually explore other options for being able to obtain the buffer stock...allowing other entities like Department of Trade and Industry [DTI] to do the importation on behalf of NFA, that could have been considered,” Briones told BusinessMirror via phone.

Briones also expressed concern over the definition of “emergency.”

“The current definition of emergency that is used for buffer stocking is meant during calamity,” he said, partly in Filipino.

“Apparently the definition is being taken or the association is being made that emergency includes instances of price increase and alleged manipulation,” Briones said.

Under the new Section 6 of the bill, the Agriculture Secretary could declare an emergency which is referred to in the bill as a food security emergency under the conditions where there are: shortage in rice supply, sustained increase in rice prices, and extraordinary increase in rice prices.

For Briones, this could be “problematic.”

He worried that non-emergency cases [may be used], but for whatever reason it's being invoked in order to allow the NFA to import...I find that problematic," he said.

According to the bill, the NFA would only be allowed to import once "all domestic sources have been exhausted" and subject to authorization from the Agriculture Secretary.

"This authority is to be exercised solely in circumstances where domestic supply deficits necessitate such imports to stabilize the national rice supply and maintain the optimal buffer stock," the bill read.

Meanwhile, Jayson Cainglet, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director, also said that other agencies could have been chosen to import rice.

Perhaps, he suggested, an "authority of the President" may be resorted to if there's a need to import, but let it not be the NFA. "There are agencies that can import instead of the NFA," Cainglet told reporters in a chance interview.

He added that they would rather the agency focus solely on palay procurement for buffer stock instead of selling rice.

Instead, he said, the NFA, since it has a budget, procure the palay for buffer stocking; but "it should no longer sell," he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/23/power-to-import-rice-should-not-be-returned-to-nfa/>



## *Convergence program on water to help attain rice sufficiency goal*

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz May 22, 2024

SPEAKER Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez expressed confidence on Wednesday that the convergence program, integrating flood control efforts with broader water management strategies, would enable the Philippines to achieve rice self-sufficiency.

In an interview, Romualdez said the program aims to align the Department of Public Works and Highways' (DPWH) flood control initiatives with the National Irrigation Administration's (NIA) water conservation efforts, ensuring efficient use of the country's water resources.

Besides ensuring water for irrigation, he said the program is expected to likewise provide bulk water sources for drinking water, hydroelectric power, and aquaculture, aside from saving the lives and properties of our people during floods triggered by monsoon rains or typhoons.

"This would lead us to, I believe, rice self-sufficiency due to higher productivity before the term of the President ends in 2028. That's the target, that's the goal, that's our aspiration, and I believe we're on our way to that," Romualdez said during the meeting between DPWH, NIA, and the lawmakers to discuss the program.

With over P349 billion allocated for flood control in 2024, Romualdez emphasized the significant opportunity to fund projects serving multiple purposes.

For his part, House Committee on Public Works and Highways Chairman Romeo Momo of Surigao del Sur, who led a series of meetings aimed at converging water-related projects between government agencies, emphasized the need for a coordinated effort to manage the country's water resources.

Momo pointed out that during the rainy season, the country experiences an abundance of water, often leading to flooding. However, during the dry season, and especially during El Niño events, water supply becomes a significant concern.

The convergence of efforts aims to create sustainable and effective solutions for the nation's water management challenges, he said.

“I fully support the President's [Ferdinand Marcos Jr.] and the Speaker's [Ferdinand Martin Romualdez] wish to converge water-related projects of these two agencies. During the rainy season, we get lots of water, even resulting in flooding, while during the dry season, or worse, during El Nino, water supply is a big concern. We have to do something to properly and effectively utilize our water resources so that this recurring problem due to climate change will be addressed,” the lawmaker said.

“The President is right in saying that water is a national issue that must be addressed on a national level. We see now that water shortages aren't just a problem in the provinces and the agriculture sector, but also in our mega-cities, which then impact the public, businesses, schools, and many others,” Momo, an engineer by profession, said.

In a sectoral meeting at Malacañang last week, President Marcos called for the reorganization of the functions of various water agencies because of the need to balance the water requirements for irrigation, household, and industrial use.

The President reiterated the importance of the integrated water resource masterplan, managing water resources amid El Niño, and mitigating floods during La Niña.

President Marcos directed the relevant agencies to further explore foreign funding for identified priority investment areas for both local and international stakeholders.

The President also sought the continued development of NIA dams for multipurpose use to include agricultural irrigation, fresh water supply, power supply, and flood control.

In April last year, President Marcos signed an executive order creating DENR's Water Management Office (WMO).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/22/convergence-program-on-water-to-help-attain-rice-sufficiency-goal/>

## *NFA paddy rice inventory jumps fourfold in May*

Ada Pelonia

May 23, 2024

The National Food Authority's (NFA) unmilled rice inventory as of May 15 quadrupled after the NFA Council raised the agency's palay buying price.

The purchases of the government corporation attached to the Department of Agriculture surged to 2.5 million 50-kilo bags or 125,000 metric tons (MT) of unmilled rice from January 1 to May 15. In January to May 2023, the NFA bought 538,843 50-kilo bags or 26,942.15 MT of palay from farmers.

NFA's palay purchases as of May 15 accounted for 82.76 percent of its target of 3.08 million 50-kilo bags, or some 150,000 MT, for the period.

"The new price scheme is really the game changer," NFA Acting Administrator Larry Lacson said in a statement.

"I think the NFA Council's strong understanding of NFA's challenges has resulted in stronger collaboration. We thank [Agriculture] Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and the Council for this."

The NFA Council earlier approved raising the buying price per kilo of palay to P23 to P30 per kilo of clean and dry palay and P17 to P23 for every kilo of wet and fresh palay, which it said allowed the agency to compete with private trades and build its buffer stock.

"We're still aiming to hit that target since there are other areas like Bulacan where farmers haven't completed their rice harvest," Lacson said.

“Farmers I spoke to are very happy with this initiative of the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to help farmers increase their income.”

The NFA said its milled rice inventory during the period reached 111,720 MT, 14.6 percent higher than the level recorded last year.

The agency said it needs over P16 billion next year to procure its target volume of rice buffer stock and build additional storage and drying facilities to improve its buffer stocking capacity.

“NFA only has the capacity to dry 31,000 MT but buys around 495,000 MT of palay. NFA is required by law to maintain a buffer stock equivalent to about 9 days of national rice consumption,” it said in a previous statement.

Paddy rice production in the first quarter declined by 2 percent to 4.685 million metric tons (MMT), from 4.778 MMT recorded a year ago, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Last year, unmilled rice production reached a record 20.06 MMT, 1.56 percent higher than the 19.756 MMT produced in 2022.

PSA data also showed that the rice output in 2023 was boosted by irrigated farmlands which produced 15.279 MMT, 2.2 percent higher than the 2022 volume of 14.938 MMT.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/23/nfa-paddy-rice-inventory-jumps-fourfold-in-may/>

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

# *Robusta coffee rises most since 2010 on Vietnam rain concerns*

Bloomberg News

May 23, 2024

Coffee futures surged, with robusta in London jumping the most intraday since 2010 as concerns grew over supply from key grower Vietnam.

Robusta coffee rose as much as 7 percent, while arabica gained 6 percent. Prices for robusta beans used in instant coffee have surged this year as droughts hurt production in Vietnam, the top grower of the variety, before easing earlier this month. Rains have helped to improve the supply picture, but more may still be needed.

Also supporting prices is high demand for robusta beans. Typically, a rise in robusta prices encourages a shift toward using more arabica in blends, but that isn't happening at this time, Andrea Illy, chairman of Italian coffee roaster Illycaffè SpA, said Tuesday on Bloomberg Television.

“It’s a quite unique dynamic in the market,” Illy said, adding that “for certain kinds of preparation, like instant coffee, robusta is more important.”

Illy said that climate change has made coffee supplies less reliable, creating an “unstable dynamic” in bean inventories and higher baseline prices.

Exports of both robusta and arabica from Brazil—the world’s top coffee producer—are strong, Rabobank analyst Guilherme Morya said in a note. But uncertainties about Vietnam’s robusta supply have attracted hedge funds into the market and driven up international prices, he said.

Meanwhile, harvests in Indonesia are expected to start this month or the following, marking a “substantial delay from the norm” due to droughts caused by El Niño, according to a Friday report from the United States Department of Agriculture.

Better weather is expected to support a recovery in output next season for Indonesia, the world's fourth-biggest coffee producer, which primarily grows the robusta variety. Production is seen rising 14 percent to about 10 million bags in 2024, the Association of Indonesian Coffee Exporters and Industries said Monday.

In other softs, cocoa rose as much as 3.8 percent, reversing losses from earlier in the session. The New York contract yesterday fell to the lowest intraday price since March.

Futures, which are trading around \$7,000 a ton, are still up more than 70 percent this year, though they have eased significantly from a mid-April record above \$11,000 a ton. A mix of rain and sun is helping cocoa plants sprout fresh leaves, flowers and cherelles in parts of Africa, where most crops are grown. Still, trees are also attracting insects and farmers are running short of pesticides.

“A shift toward wetter weather over the past few months has improved the prospects for West Africa's upcoming production, which has pressured cocoa prices,” the Hightower Report said. But there are fears that a lack of fertilizer and pesticide use will hurt output during the 2024-25 season.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/23/robusta-coffee-rises-most-since-2010-on-vietnam-rain-concerns/>

## ***ASF vaccine advances to last phase of trial— DA official***

Ada Pelonia

May 23, 2024

The African swine fever (ASF) vaccine has entered the third and final stage of trial, a senior official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said Wednesday.

Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor B. Savellano also said on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the Livestock and Aquaculture Philippines 2024 in Pasay City that the government is also looking into mechanisms for its distribution.

*“Sa ASF vaccine naman nasa third phase na tayo, ‘yung last trial, and hopefully matapos na kaagad kasi ‘yun ang hinihingi ng lahat. [The ASF vaccine is on its last trial, and we hope trials will conclude immediately as all stakeholders are awaiting it], Savellano told reporters.*

He added that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) are working closely to hasten the approval process for the vaccine to fight a fatal hog disease that nearly decimated hog farms struck by ASF.

Savellano expressed confidence that the vaccine rollout could begin by December. He said the government’s priority is to help backyard raises who constitute around 70 percent to 80 percent of the country’s hog producers.

When asked if the government would provide the vaccines to farmers for free, Savellano said the government has funds to help.

*“May pondo naman ‘yung gobyerno, siguro ‘yung talagang nangangailangan. Pag-aaralan pa namin kung pano ‘yung implementing rules and regulations [IRR] noon. [The government has funds, so we’ll probably focus on those really in need of it. But we will study its IRR],” he said.*

In the meantime, Savellano urged the public to cooperate with local government units (LGUs) in ensuring that biosecurity measures are in place to prevent the spread of the disease.

*“Gusto namin makipatulungan sa lahat, especially mga LGUs. Yung pagtugon natin sa biosecurity [measures] kailangan sama-sama tayo doon. [We want to cooperate with everyone, especially with LGUs. Our response toward biosecurity measures should be done collectively],”* he said.

He claimed that simple biosecurity measures like foot baths in airports and ports should be put in place, particularly on farms.

The FDA earlier confirmed that BAI had applied for certification of the Avac vaccine from Vietnam, which would be subject to pre-assessment. (*See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/08/21/manila-must-speed-up-accreditation-purchase-of-asf-vaccines-lawmaker/>*)

Savellano also said the FDA and BAI are set to sign a memorandum of agreement that would fasttrack the vaccine rollout. However, it has been postponed. (*See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/08/da-government-wants-to-fast-track-launch-of-vaccine-vs-asf/>*)

ASF is a deadly swine disease that affects domestic pigs and wild boars. It has been reported in several countries, such as Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Korea. The Philippines first detected the ASF outbreak in 2019.

The latest BAI monitoring released on April 26 showed that 78 barangays nationwide have active ASF cases. Since 2019, the BAI has confirmed ASF outbreaks in 5,324 barangays in 73 provinces and 17 regions.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/23/asf-vaccine-advances-to-last-phase-of-trial-da-official/>



## ***PSA data: Skilled agriculture workers in short supply***

Cai U. Ordinario

May 23, 2024

Majority of job vacancies in the agriculture, forestry, and fishery sector are considered hard-to-fill jobs, according to the latest Integrated Survey on Labor and Employment (ISLE) conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The survey covers formal establishments employing at least 20 workers. The data showed 78.4 percent of job vacancies for skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers had the highest proportion of positions considered hard-to-fill.

The PSA also showed that as a percent share to total job vacancies, the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing sector also recorded one of the highest rates.

“Hard-to-fill positions pose difficulties in recruitment such as lack of applicants, lack of years of experience, and lack of competency and/or skill, among others.”

The data showed there were a total of 2,151 job vacancies for skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers. This was composed of 1,687 hard-to-fill positions and only 465 easy-to-fill positions.

In terms of the number of job vacancies in establishments employing 20 or more workers, the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing industry had a total of 3,039 job vacancies.

Some 63.9 percent or 1,941 of these job vacancies are considered hard-to-fill jobs while 36.1 percent or 1,098 jobs were considered easy-to-fill jobs.

Among the total number of job vacancies, 239,254 or 51.5 percent were hard to fill. The remaining 48.5 percent were easy-to-fill or job vacancies that had no difficulty during recruitment.

“The top three reasons why job vacancies were considered to be hard-to-fill were few or no applicants applying for the job vacancy [43.1 percent], applicants expecting a high salary [17.2 percent], and applicants lacking needed competency or skill [17.1 percent],” PSA said.

In the ISLE, from September 2021 to August 2022, some 35.8 percent of the 36,342 estimated number of formal establishments employing 20 or more workers had posted job vacancies.

Job vacancies, PSA said, refer to unfilled job openings that are immediately available for placement and where active recruitment steps are being undertaken.

A total of 464,593 vacant positions were recorded for establishments employing 20 or more workers. Administrative and Support Service Activities had the highest share to total job vacancies at 43.1 percent.

This was followed by Manufacturing at 20 percent, and Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles at 11 percent.

The Other Service Activities except Activities of Membership Organizations recorded the least number of job vacancies at 649 or 0.1 percent of the total.

The data also showed entry-level positions, which are starting positions that require little to no experience, comprised the majority or 82.6 percent of the total job vacancies.

This was followed by junior level position at 13.6 percent, while senior and executive positions recorded shares of 3.5 percent and 0.3 percent, respectively.

This month, the PSA said the severe dry spell has caused the agriculture and fisheries sector to shed more than a million jobs in March 2024.

Based on the March Labor Force Statistics, the number of employed Filipinos rose by 572,000 to 49.15 million in 2024 from the 48.58 million posted in the same period of 2023.

However, agriculture and forestry, as well as fishing and aquaculture, posted the largest declines in employment with a combined 1.33 million jobs lost in March

2024. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/09/dry-spell-causes-agriculture-fisheries-1-million-job-loss/>)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/23/psa-data-skilled-agri-workers-in-short-supply/>

**REMATE:**

## Mas mataas na buying price nagpalakas sa palay inventory ng NFA

May 22, 2024 17:07



MANILA, Philippines – Napatas ng National Food Authority (NFA) ang palay inventory sa loob ng isang buwan makaraang taasan din ang buying price ng palay.

Sa pahayag, sinabi ng NFA na mula nang aprubahan ang mas mataas na procurement pice ng palay noong Abril 11, nakabili na ang pamahalaan ng karagdagang 2.41 milyong 50-kilo bags ng palay hanggang noong Mayo 15.

Kumpara sa panahon mula Enero 1 hanggang Abril 15, nakabili lamang ang ahensya ng nasa 142,244 na bag ng palay.

Sa kabuuan, ang total procurement ng NFA ay nasa 2.5 milyong bags ng palay mula Enero 1 hanggang Mayo 15. Ito ay nagrerepresenta sa 82.76% ng target ng ahensya na 3.08 milyong palay sa kaparehong panahon.

Noong nakaraang buwan, tinaasan ng NFA Council ang procurement price sa kada kilo ng palay sa P23 patungong P30 kada

kilo at P19 ay ginawang P23 para sa malinis at tuyong palay, habang mula P17 patungong P23 at P16 patungong P19 naman para sa sariwa at basang palay.

Nagsimulang bumili ang ahensya sa mas mataas na presyo noong Abril 17.

“The new price scheme is really the game changer,” ayon kay NFA acting administrator Larry Lacson.

“I think the NFA Council’s strong understanding of the NFA’s challenges has resulted in stronger collaboration. We thank Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and the Council for this,” dagdag pa niya.

Sa ilalim ng Rice Tariffication Law, inatasan ang NFA na panatilihin ang national rice buffer stock na katumbas sa siyam na araw na consumption, o ngayon ay nasa 330,000 metric tons, para sakupin ang mga oras ng kalamidad.

Hindi naman pinapayagan ng batas ang NFA na mag-import ng bigas o trading sa agricultural commodities dahil inoobliga nito ang ahensya na kumuha lamang ng buffer stock mula sa local rice farmers.

“We’re still aiming to hit that target since there are other areas like Bulacan where farmers haven’t completed their rice harvest,” ani Lacson. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/mas-mataas-na-buying-price-nagpalakas-sa-palay-inventory-ng-nfa/>